

By Lauren Knobbe, *MinnPost*

WASHINGTON - The head of the Minnesota Farmers Union is set to testify at a Senate hearing today on legislation that aims to reduce water pollution from agricultural practices.

Two bills would create a scientific monitoring system for the Mississippi River headwaters to collect data and take inventory of the sedimentary content. The study would cover the headwaters in Minnesota, Wisconsin, Illinois, Iowa and Missouri.

The House bill (HR 3671) passed in March with a vote of 289-121 under the support of 10 co-sponsors, including Reps. Keith Ellison, Betty McCollum and Tim Walz. Sen. Amy Klobuchar sponsored a companion measure, S 2779, in the Senate.

Sediment and nutrient runoff is most often linked to agricultural practices that lead to water pollution and damage to the surrounding environment.

Doug Peterson, president of the farmers union, said the legislation brings participation of farmers to the forefront of conservation efforts.

"This is a great opportunity to stress the need for farmer participation in this process to ensure that implementation plans contain pollution-reduction strategies that consider local needs," Peterson said in a statement previewing his testimony.